

N. Korea Draws Cross Words

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PYONGYANG, North Korea — Isolated and impoverished North Korea said Tuesday that it is ready to go ahead with its proposed long-range rocket launch, an announcement that sparked immediate condemnation from South Korea and Russia and a plea from China, its main ally, for calm.

The launch of the Unha-3 rocket, which North Korea says will merely put a weather satellite into space, breaches UN sanctions imposed to prevent Pyongyang from developing a missile that could carry a nuclear warhead.

Russia, a former backer of North Korea which has boosted economic ties with Pyongyang, denounced the program.

"We consider Pyongyang's decision to conduct a launch of a satellite an example of disregard for UN Security Council decisions," RIA-Novosti quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich as saying.

(Reuters)

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